27 May 1960

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT: Mr. George F. Kennen's Appearance 26 May 1960 in Open Session before the Senate Subcommittee on National Policy Machinery, Committee on Government Operations

1. This memorandum is for information only.

2. Mr. Kennen began with a prepared statement outlining his views on organizational deficiencies hampering American foreign policy. A verbatim copy of Mr. Kennen's statement is attached.

3. Committee Chairman Jackson stated that there would be a series of hearings during the week on National Security Council coordination policies intended first to discover whether adequate machinery for inter-agency coordination exists and, second, whether this machinery is being utilized effectively with the view toward making recommendations for possible new legislation. Senator Jackson said that specific testimony on the U-2 incident would be taken in executive session beginning on 26 May.

4. Senator Jackson asked Mr. Kennen to explain the decision-making process in the Soviet Union. Mr. Kennen stated that policy decisions are made in the Soviet Union through party machinery and not through government apparatus. He said, however, that up to the moment any decision is taken, any participant in the discussion may state freely his views. It was his belief that the Soviet leaders work out the more important policy decisions "on the spot" without need for lengthy studies made by subordinates. Nevertheless, he said, the Soviet Union possesses and uses very able experts in particular fields who keep this small group of high policy makers informed. Mr. Kennen stated that the two advantages which Moscow derives from this system are privacy and organization speed and flexibility. He said that the Soviet leaders "play issues by ear" more than many people might suppose.

5. Mr. Kennen stated that U. S. officials charged with the function of gathering intelligence must, at the same time, be charged with the full range of foreign policy responsibility in his opinion. He stated further that a well-coordinated policy is essential to avoid cancelling out the positive effects of other foreign policy efforts. He added that coordination in this field has not always been satisfactory.

6. Mr. Kennen was asked to comment on the subject of personal versus traditional diplomacy. He read from a statement by him over BBC three years ago in which he argued against heads of government level meetings at the opening of any negotiations. He stated that the failure of the Summit Conference at Paris epitomized the situations described in this earlier statement. He stated further that where there is a real possibility for agreement between nations this possibility can be explored through normal diplomatic channels.

7. Senator Mundt asked Mr. Kennen what ideas he might have to improve the coordination process in the Federal Government. Mr. Kennen replied that the President needs a top-level assistant who would be given enough authority to coordinate all activities which might affect U. S. foreign policy. He suggested that the Secretary of State be given this function. In reply to a question by Senator Javits, Mr. Kennen stated that the National Security Council must continue to assist as an advisory council although some of its present responsibilities should be assumed by the Secretary of State in his enlarged capacity as assistant to the President.

8. Mr. Kennen criticized the foreign service for its cumbersome size and its recent recruitment policies. He stated that the foreign service to be effective must be small enough that each member would know all the others personally. He stated that greater reliance should be placed on senior people particularly in appraising a subordinate's security reliability. The dangers of running security checks in an impersonal way are greater than an occasional mistake, he said.

9. Mr. Kennen stated that a considerable number of individuals who have served in Federal governmental capacities would be well suited for studying methods of improving the machinery of making national policy. He stated, however, that efficiency experts whose backgrounds are geared to the problems of private business would be unsuited for this task as Government management principles differ basically from those of private enterprise.

10. Chairman Jackson announced that the hearings would continue in executive session with particular emphasis on Mr. Kennen's view on the U-2 incident.

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Office of General Counsel

Attachment

For release:
10:00 A.M.
Thurs., May 26, 1960

STATEMENT BY

THE HONORABLE GEORGE F. KENNAN

Professor, Institute for Advanced Studies,
Princeton, N. J.
Formerly Director, Policy Planning Staff,
Department of State, and United States
Ambassador to the Soviet Union

Before the

SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL POLICY MACHINERY

Senator Henry M. Jackson, Chairman

May 26, 1960

I appreciate your courtesy in inquiring my views on the subjects which you have under examination, and am happy to contribute what I can. I have, I believe, particular reason to welcome the effort this Subcommittee has undertaken to reexamine the effectiveness of our present governmental machinery. For many years I have felt that organizational deficiencies had a much greater relative importance in hampering our performance as a world power than has commonly been realized in this country. Even if we had the most excellent conceptual foundation for an American foreign policy, and the greatest mastery of diplomatic method in our external relations, I feel we would still find ourselves seriously hampered, as things stand today, by the cumbersomeness of our governmental machinery and by the inappropriateness of much of it to the purposes it is supposed to serve. The appalling growth in numbers of personnel and the seemingly endless proliferation of competing agencies and committees has appeared to me to be only in minor part a response to real needs and in major part the result of some unhealthy internal compulsions, the source of which no one has as yet fully identified and the cure for which has certainly not yet been found. These are the reasons why I feel that the work this subcommittee is performing is of exceptional importance; and I should like, if I may, as a private citizen, to express my high respect for the insights that brought the members of the subcommittee to this work and my appreciation for the determined effort you have put forward to get to the bottom of these baffling but important problems.

You, Mr. Chairman, were kind enough to suggest, in the letter inviting me to appear here today, certain of the questions on which you and your colleagues would welcome my testimony; and I thought it might save time if I were to summarize at the outset my views on some of these points.

1. The role of the Secretary of State in the initiation and development of national security policy.

It is my view that there should be some one senior official in the Executive Branch of the government who could act as the President's principal executive agent for all matters affecting the national security and, indeed, our relations with the outside world generally. This would include military as well as other matters. There are of course a number of alternative solutions of this problem. All of these have both advantages and disadvantages. To my mind, the most desirable of these alternatives would be that the office of the Secretary of State should be recognized as enjoying a certain primacy in all matters of external relations, including the national security. Such primacy ought properly to be assigned, it seems to me, to the office which has primary responsibility, anyway, for the conduct of the nation's foreign relations on the <u>political</u> level. There is, as I understand it, a certain historical justification for such a distinction both

in the title "Secretary of State" itself, which suggests that the office is not one limited merely to the conduct of foreign affairs, and in the fact that the Secretary of State was designated as the keeper of the Great Seal of the United States.

In expressing this view, I recognize that the Secretary of State, even under such an arrangement, would remain essentially an assistant of the President. He could not absolve or relieve the President. He could not absolve or relieve the President of any of his present constitutional responsibility in this field. He should, however, if given such position and authority, be able to relieve the President of a good deal of the executive burden now connected with this responsibility, and to assure a better coordination of military policy with national policy generally than we have had in recent years.

If this expedient were to be adopted, one might well wish at some stage to supplement the office of Secretary of State with that of a Secretary for Foreign Affairs, as suggested by Mr. Robert Lovett in his recent testimony before this subcommittee. But this expedient should not be hastily adopted, and the arrangement should first be given a trial without it. Among the organizational evils to which our government has been vulnerable in recent years has been a tendency to the inflation of titles: giving more and more lofty names to positions which are really much more subordinate than the title would imply. I suspect that we have already been too prodigal in the dispensing of cabinet status; and we should certainly not add another official of cabinet rank unless we find this to be absolutely necessary. A basic principle of organization which has often been ignored in our government is that there are narrow limits to the number of people who can be expected to report personally to any single superior officer, be it the President or a cabinet secretary. To create a cabinet larger than the President can effectively use as an intimate agency of his authority is merely to impair the value of the cabinet as an institution. These are the reasons why, as it seems to me, we should be very circumspect about adding further cabinet offices.

2. What is the best way of providing for the policy planning process in the State Department?

I believe that the policy planning process as established by Secretary of State George C. Marshall in 1947, and as maintained until the end of 1949, was essentially sound. Prior to the establishment of the Policy Planning Staff, only two officials in the Department of State were competent to take into account, in their advice to the Secretary, the entire range of the problems of our foreign relations. These were the Under Secretary of State and the Counselor. Neither of these officials had both the time

and the facilities to give careful and exhaustive study to long-range problems of policy or to problems of exceptional intricacy, involving the orderly assembling of information from a wide variety of sources. All other officials of the Department were able to advise the Secretary only from the perspective of a limited geographical or functional competence.

This presented a serious problem for the Secretary of State. If he asked the various geographic and functional offices to reconcile their views by the process of compromise before advising him on a given problem, the issues were apt to be obscured before they ever reached his attention. If they presented their conflicting views to him without prior reconciliation of them, the task of identifying the elements of conflict and determining to what extent they represented disparities of information, to what extent parochial concerns of the respective office, and to what extent important questions of principle, was a task for which he himself lacked the leisure and for which he required an independent staff. It was this gap which the Policy Planning Staff endeavored to fill during the period of my incumbency as its director. While under no illusions that our work could not have been improved, I felt (and Secretary Marshall subsequently expressed himself as being of this opinion) that the Staff was useful in meeting this need. Its greatest usefulness, as I saw it, was that it provided the Secretary of State with a continuous series of advisory opinions, representing the expression of a consistent and disciplined point of view, based on the obligation to consider all aspects of national policy, and applied to a variety and succession of international problems.

Obviously, the usefulness of such a staff would be greatly affected by any decisions taken with respect to the office of the Secretary of State itself. If the Secretary should be given a position of primacy in external relations and matters of national security, then it is particularly fitting that the policy planning work be done by a unit directly advisory to him.

Let me stress that the sort of staff I have in mind cannot be effectively replaced by a group of officials having other competencies and responsibilities and meeting only occasionally in an ex officio capacity. To be effective in the manner in which it was conceived by General Marshall, such a staff would have to be composed of individuals devoid of any other institutional loyalty or disciplinary relationship within the government, serving only the official to whom their advisory capacity relates, and able to give their opinions with the most rigorous frankness and independence, uninhibited by any ulterior obligations or interests.

3. What are the problems and possibilities in the use of experts and consultants in policy planning in State and Defense?

There is, of course, real need from time to time for the consultation of outside experts in the work of policy planning. Where this need exists

no opportunity should be neglected to enlist this sort of assistance. The services of such people should be utilized in such a manner as to make most economical use of their time and that of the government official involved. In particular, care should be taken not to take up the time of consultants and of staff members by personal meetings until all available written evidences of a consultant's views have been carefully studied and taken into account.

However, it is important to bear in mind that the function of such consultants is to help make the responsible governmental judgment an informed one, not to substitute for it. The consultant must not be formally relied upon to tell what the answer is; he must be asked to give information and opinion which facilitate decision on the part of those who bear the governmental responsibility.

4. In what way might our foreign service be better prepared and recruited, especially in the light of the need for understanding by career officials of political-military-scientific factors?

I respond to this question with some hesitation; for it is now some years since I left government, and I am not fully informed about present procedures.

I have had misgivings from the start about the soundness of certain features of the reform conducted some years ago in the recruitment and organization of the Foreign Service, and about our subsequent practices in this respect.

First of all, I have the impression that the Service is overstaffed and that we take in too many people.

Secondly, I think the Service should not include people who, while they may be technical experts in some specific field, lack the broader background of education and character necessary for foreign service work, generally.

Thirdly, I question the adequacy of an entrance examination which, as I understand it, includes no question of prose composition and thus fails to test adequately the candidate's ability to express himself clearly and effectively in his own language (which is also a test of his ability to think clearly).

Fourthly, I have the impression that we go too far in emphasis on broad geographic distribution. While I would like to see the Service as representative as possible of all geographic regions and professional sections of our society, I do not feel that the standards of admission, either

educational or in point of character and personality, should be in any way sacrificed to the achievement of this goal. The concern of those who control admissions to the Foreign Service should be to see that we find the people best qualified for the performance of the functions of the Service; and this effort should not be impaired by making a fetish of geographic distribution. In particular, it should not be held against candidates that they have attended specific institutions or come from specific parts of the country. This last is a form of negative discrimination no less invidious than would be a discrimination on behalf of these people.

Fifthly, the system of security controls, as I recall it from my own most recent governmental experience, seems to me to have been poorly conceived, in some respects illogical, overly mechanical, humiliating, and in many instances discouraging to the individual officer. I am unwilling to believe that some better means could not be found to assure the loyalty and reliability of Foreign Service personnel: means which, without in any way weakening the national security, would inspire greater confidence in the people themselves, would involve greater recognition of demonstrated loyalty and devotion to the government's interests, and would place greater weight on the opinions of superior officers who have known a member of the Foreign Service in his daily work, and less on the opinions of security agents whose identity is often unknown to the subject himself and have no intimate acquaintance with either his personality or his substantive work.

I am frank to say that I cannot conceive of an effective Foreign Service otherwise than as a gentleman's service, not in the sense that it would be based on distinctions of birth or social status, but in the sense that extensive reliance would be placed at all times on the honor and the sense of obligation of the individual officer himself, and he would be treated with the confidence and tact and consideration customary in circles where high standards of honor and responsibility are assumed to prevail. You cannot treat people like crooks and expect them to react like enthusiastic, high-minded public servants.

I deplore in particular the compartmentalization which makes certain people responsible for the substantive aspects of a man's work, and others responsible for matters of his loyalty and reliability. I believe that people can be usefully looked at only in their entirety, as whole personalities. I do not believe that the various aspects of character and personality can be separated when it comes to judging a man's usefulness to the government in any respect.

With particular relation to the range of knowledge of Foreign Service officers in political, military, and scientific fields, I consider that all Foreign Service officers ought to pursue, particularly in the first ten or twenty years of their service, the effort to broaden their general educational

background; that it should be the duty of the Department of State to encourage and help them in this respect; and that for this purpose there should be occasional periods of in-service educational training, along the lines of those now provided for a few officers by the National War College and other service academies, but embracing all officers and not just a highly selected minority.

5. To what extent does the committee system as it now operates complicate and impede decision-making in the national security area?

It is my opinion that the committee system as it now operates complicates and impedes very seriously decision-making in the national security area. We are confronted here with what appear to me to be some very basic misunderstandings and malpractices in the use of advisory committees. The greatest of these faults is the setting up of committees in which no one person has the basic responsibility for decision and where each participant has in effect the power of veto over the committee's findings. We will not, I believe, get away from this evil until we adopt a system of rigorous personal responsibility down through the entire machinery of these branches of government. The designation of such responsibility would in many instances have to be arbitrary, but even an arbitrary designation of major responsibility would be better than none at all. Committees could, and should, be formed or invited to assemble only under the chairmanship of an official who has been given primary responsibility for the question or questions under examination. It might be made incumbent on the chairman, when the committee has completed its work, to report dissenting opinions along with his own. But he should bear full responsibility for the recommendation made, and should not be bound in this respect to achieve either unanimity or majority approval of the members of the committee.

The present system leads to endless compromises, both of substance and of language, with the result that these committees, operating on the basis of the negative veto, often come up with compromise recommendations weaker than any of the conflicting points of view originally put forward around the committee table. It would have been better, in many instances, to take the original view of any one of the participants than to attempt to work on the basis of the compromise language finally produced. The reason why this cannot be done under the present system is that there is no one to decide which of these views to take; and if the disagreement is bucked to the next higher level, the result usually is that the same process of compromise is merely repeated there.

One great need which this reform would serve would be to save some of the loss of people's time involved in these committee meetings. A chairman who has the power to decide something can conduct a meeting with despatch, obtain the views of others present, make his decision, and be done with it. Meetings under the present system are endlessly time-consuming.

It is often argued that the replacement of the present committee system by a system of rigorous personal authority and responsibility would be "undemocratic." In my opinion, this view involves a total misconception of the nature of the Executive Branch of the government, and a misuse of the term "democracy." It is here, on Capitol Hill, where parliamentary principles have their place. The Executive Branch is not supposed to be a political community. Its officials are there to serve the President and to help him in the exercise of his constitutional authority. Whatever results in the fragmentizing and obscuration of that authority, as does the present committee system, is surely not serving in the best possible manner the purposes of the Constitution.

6. Is there a danger that we are now over-organized?

I cannot speak for the Defense Department, but the Department of State and the Foreign Service, as I knew them when I left government, seemed to me to be seriously over-organized. I have heard of nothing to suggest that this condition has been substantially corrected to date.

I can offer only hypotheses as to where the root of the evil lies.

The first of these would be in the committee system I have just described.

A second would be what I might call the contagion of "bigness" in the governmental machinery generally. It is hard, if only for the liaison demands it is called upon to meet, for any governmental unit to remain compact in a general atmosphere of huge and complex governmental machinery. Here, I suspect that the State Department has been in part the victim, indirectly, of the prodigal use of personnel to which, as I see it, the armed services have long been prone.

A third and very important source of this unhealthy condition might be found in the tendency to complete separation of managerial and personnel functions from substantive ones. Closely connected with this would be a conscious attempt to rule out individual judgment, individual responsibility, and the person-to-person relationship as factors in the operation of the personnel control, and to attempt to achieve a degree of impersonality and mechanistic functioning of the whole administrative structure which would make it unnecessary to have talented and experienced people to run it. I am satisfied that a much smaller and more compact group of individuals, bound to each other by personal intimacy and confidence as well as by a long community of experience,, could accomplish far more expeditiously and effectively what is now accomplished by a badly bloated apparatus operating, for the most part, without these advantages. The frequent experience that in moments of real urgency it becomes necessary to bypass whole great sections of the regular machinery in order to get something done is simply

a proof that this machinery has achieved a degree of unwieldiness which makes it unsuitable as a vehicle for the formulation and execution of the policies of a great government in a precarious world.

The task of reducing this official machinery once more to workable dimensions is obviously a baffling and difficult one. It is a process which could lead to great injustices if it were not performed with much understanding and care. With the greatest of respect for the individuals involved, I find it difficult to believe that the ideas and impulses necessary for such a sanification can come primarily from those now bearing the administrative responsibility in the various echelons of the Department. This is partly because they are themselves among those who are most harried and exhausted by the effort to make the present cumbersome machinery work and they have little time to study these matters with detachment, partly because the inquiry would have to be of so broad a nature as to involve the questioning of many things they would no doubt feel it beyond their competence to question. I am also skeptical of the ability of business efficiency experts to find the proper solutions, for the work of a governmental office differs in many essential respects from that of a business enterprise and cannot be approached on the same principles.

I fear that we have yet to develop a proper theory of administrative practice for use within the Executive Branch of the federal government. The work of developing such a theory is work that could be done only by people who combine long experience in this branch of the government with an interest in, and insight into, the administrative process; and it could be properly accomplished only if such people were to apply themselves consistently to the task over a prolonged period of time, with high executive backing. If they are simply called in as short-term consultants and at once dismissed, the job will not be done. But this work must at some point be undertaken before we can cure the disease of over-organization which is rapidly making the Department of State and, I suspect, other governmental entities as well, into unhealthy and ineffective instruments of the executive authority.

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J.W. Warner

MEMORANDUM FOR: ~~THE DIRECTOR~~

For information only.

Attached is the statement by George Kennen before the Jackson Subcommittee on May 26. In addition, we have attached a report by a member of this office on some of the questions asked of Mr. Kennen and the nature of the responses.

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Noted by
27 MAY 1960

JOHN S. WARNER
Legislative Counsel

27 May 1960
(DATE)

FORM NO. 101 REPLACES FORM 10-101
1 AUG 54 WHICH MAY BE USED. (47)